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## Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, source of wisdom and fountain of knowledge, we praise You for the gift of Your love. Guide our Senators with Your love. Do not permit the confusion of our time to confuse them. Empower them to contribute to the rightness of things. Let them be part of the answer to the problems in our world.

As they choose the hard right over the easy wrong, give them Your peace. May their lives count for good when even the best does not seem enough. Create within each of us clean hearts and renewed right spirits, that we may become instruments of Your love.

Lord, may the spirit of this prayer be acceptable to You. We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SAM BROWNBACK led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, July 26, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWNBACK thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### GULF OF MEXICO ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2006—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate resumes consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3711, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 3711, a bill to enhance the energy independence and security of the United States by providing for exploration, development, and production activities for mineral resources in the Gulf of Mexico, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 10 a.m. shall be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Who seeks recognition?

### RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from the great State of Wyoming.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. This morning we will have approximately 1 hour of debate prior to the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the Gulf of Mexico energy security bill. The vote will occur at about 10 o'clock today, and immediately following that vote we will recess for the 11 o'clock joint meeting. I remind my colleagues to remain in the Chamber following that vote so that we

may proceed at 10:40 this morning to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by the Prime Minister of Iraq. I thank all Senators for their attention.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I understand there are 15 minutes equally divided. I am not sure what equally divided means this morning, but we will do our best. I think Senator BINGAMAN may be here and might want the opposition's time. We will try to use our time in favor of it as judiciously as we can. I start by yielding myself 6 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 6 minutes.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, today is a very important day. Let me explain why that is to all the Senators and those who are interested.

First, I am going to try to convince our colleagues today that this small lease sale that we are talking about is one of the most important issues spoken of in this Chamber this year. This morning, as the Sun rises over the majestic dome of the Capitol and families wake up across the land, whether it be in Albuquerque, NM, or in New Orleans, LA, or Miami, FL, as they wake up, millions of Americans around the great land find their homes cooled and after breakfast they start their cars, drive their children through their neighborhoods, in carpools or otherwise, to get some needed relief from

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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the heat. But for these families there is no relief from the high cost of energy.

For too long we have remained unable to provide a remedy for that. In the words of the man in charge of our Nation's monetary policy, "one likely source of the deceleration [of economic growth] is higher energy prices, which has adversely affected the purchasing power of households and weighed on our consumer attitudes."

In plain speak, that means if we don't take action, we are in trouble. I assure my colleagues, there is a growing chorus in America and this chorus demands energy relief. It demands our attention to the simple piece of property in the Gulf of Mexico.

We are here to talk about whether to proceed on an item that is critical to American jobs and to our Nation's economy. In the Gulf of Mexico we have a piece of real estate owned by the Government that is the subject matter of what we choose to call the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act. We direct the Secretary of Interior to lease the area commonly known as 181 within 1 year after the date of the enactment of this bill. We further remove the moratorium or restriction on the area to the south of 181 and we direct the Secretary to lease that area also.

Taken together, these are 8.3 million acres. I will explain them on the map here in a second, briefly, so I can have my fellow Senators, two of them who want to speak, have an opportunity to do so. They have been vital in getting this done.

But let me summarize. This 8.3 million acres contains 1.26 billion barrels of oil, American oil, and 5.8—or rounded out—6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. These resources under the sea are American assets on American lands and the power to unleash these resources lies in the hands of the Senate. Or we can walk away and adopt an alternative and that is to continue to increase our dependence on foreign sources of energy from hostile regions of the world.

As American jobs hang in the balance, I remind my colleagues that between 1999 and 2005, a period of time equal to one term in the Senate, the price of natural gas in the United States increased 289 percent. At the same time we lost over 3 million jobs in the manufacturing sector.

In the words of the Federal Reserve Chairman:

High prices of natural gas reflect strong demand and diminished supplies.

This vote today is a step toward correcting that imbalance.

Also, in this gulf coast bill we provide protections to the Florida coastline. Thanks to the skills and heart and concern of the distinguished Senator MEL MARTINEZ from the State of Florida, we have protected the Florida coastline in this legislation.

I say to those opposed to this legislation, these provisions are a compromise between those who seek additional access to new areas of develop-

ment and those who do not want to develop off their shores. We struck a balance. Here in the Senate that balance has the overwhelming support of those who seek additional Outer Continental Shelf deep sea access, and the overwhelming support of those whose priority is coastal protection. I am proud of this balance and I defend it against those who challenge it and seek to undermine it.

Finally, the bill is both fiscally responsible and meets the needs of the coastal States that make the sacrifice of hosting our energy infrastructure. It takes care of them in a fair way.

I do not take my fiscal responsibility lightly and I do not make the fact of fiscal responsibility a light issue. I come at this issue with a vast experience in budget matters in the Senate and I can tell you this: The cost associated with sharing the OCS receipts must be weighed against the cost of inaction. I can tell you for certain, inaction would be devastating. When the destruction of the Hurricanes Rita and Katrina ravaged our Nation's gulf, it was a national tragedy, not simply a regional occurrence. Our response should continue to be national in scope and wide in its vision.

We have all heard the anecdotes of how this region hosts about half of our Nation's refining capacity and infrastructure. We heard statistics from the Mineral Management Service that showed that the Outer Continental Shelf plays a major role in supplying our energy resources.

Let me summarize. The Gulf of Mexico is the most prolific producing offshore region and we cannot leave one giant piece of it—one piece of real estate owned by the people that is probably more energy laden than any other piece of real estate in the lower 48—we can't leave it sit there. We have struck a fair balance in this bill and I can say for certain it deserves the sincere consideration of every Senator.

When we start voting, I believe every Senator should say, in fairness, let us proceed. A few days from now an overwhelming number of Senators should say proceed to permit this property, owned by the people, with supplies of gas for the people—let it be used by the people so we don't have to spend more money overseas, sending our dollars and our hard-earned currency to buy what we own, that we can produce in the next decade.

The production will be astronomical if we put our heads to understanding that it is America's property, it is America's resources. There is no risk. We ought to get on with changing 25 years of what started in California, of a fear that was irrational, and get on with reasonable, rational, safe, deep-water drilling.

I yield the floor.

The Senator from Louisiana is here and when she is finished, I would yield the remaining time to Senator MARTINEZ.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I appreciate the introduction to this important measure by the chairman of the Energy Committee, Senator DOMENICI. No one has worked harder, in my view, in this entire Chamber, and perhaps in the entire Congress, to help us reach a reasonable, balanced energy policy. The Chairman knows, and I agree with him, we can't drill our way out of this situation. But neither can we conserve our way. We have to stay on parallel tracks to drill more where we can of oil and gas, and conserve more where we can.

The last Energy bill reached a pretty good balance of that. This is another step forward in that reasonable, rational, progressive road the chairman is trying to provide. He is providing excellent leadership and I am proud to support his efforts.

This bill, as the Senator from New Mexico said, will open up significant tracts of land off of the gulf coast for drilling of oil and gas that we need as a nation. I have spoken about this bill many times in terms of its benefits to Louisiana and the gulf coast, and I will again this morning. But before I do that, I would like to speak to the national issue.

Senator DOMENICI is correct when he said this country needs these reserves—and we need them now. This area of the gulf, 8.3 million acres that we have been able to negotiate based on the good work of Senator MARTINEZ and others in the Gulf Coast States, will provide more than six times the amount of natural gas that this country imports in the form of LNG each year. Let me repeat that—six times the amount of natural gas—liquefied natural gas—that this country imports every year. It has more oil than the proven reserves of Wyoming and Oklahoma combined. There is more oil here for our Nation that desperately needs it.

Our manufacturing sector is doing the best it can do to hold onto jobs in the United States. This is an issue that Senators on both sides of the aisle feel strongly about: keeping jobs in America. If we want to keep jobs in America, we need to follow the Chairman's lead and open up lease sale 181 and 181 South.

Only a year ago, the price of natural gas was \$15 per million Btu. Today we are fortunate. It has gone down to \$6, but 3 or 4 years ago it was \$2. It is volatile and it is too high. We need to take it down and stabilize it for manufacturing and agricultural interests from which every single Senator in this body benefits.

We are competing internationally. Overseas they can produce natural gas for a fraction of what it costs us here. Our industries are struggling to hang on because the price is too high. This will help to get our price down, to stabilize it, and bring down the futures that are driving up our prices.

The same for oil: only a few years ago a barrel of oil was \$35 a barrel. Today it is selling for about \$75 a barrel.

We need to open up more domestic reserves—first, for the country because it is a smart and balanced energy policy. It is sound economic policy—to keep jobs right in the United States.

Second, we must open up these domestic reserves because it is sound environmental policy. Let me speak about the gulf coast for just a few moments.

I have come to this floor many times in the 10 years that I have been here to talk about the gulf coast where I was born and raised, part of the country that I think is the most beautiful and the most special. Of course, we all think the place we are born is that way. But I have also said this coast is America's only energy coast.

This is a satellite picture taken just recently. It shows the coast of Florida, the coast of Alabama, Mobile Bay, the great boot of Louisiana, the shore of Mississippi, and the great expanse of the shore of Texas. This area, since the 1940s, has been the only area in the United States that has allowed offshore oil and gas drilling. We have experimented there for 40 years. We made a lot of mistakes. But we have done a lot of things right. Now we have an industry that actually resembles the space program more than it does the old-time roughneck industry with oil greasy derricks of the old days, as seen in those black and white pictures. Today, the industry deploys technology that looks like a spaceship out in the Gulf of Mexico. We are proud of the gulf. Every widget, every gadget, every seismic device, every flange, every wellhead in large measure has been crafted, designed, and built by people along the gulf coast—and it is a trade that we are proud of. We do it without major spills. We do it simultaneously as we enhance our fisheries, and we do it proudly. We want to continue to do it.

We have laid thousands of miles of pipeline that send oil and gas not just to Louisiana but all over this country for people who live in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, places like Illinois, places in the Midwest. I want you to see where these pipelines start. They start in the Gulf of Mexico.

We drill for oil and gas proudly—and we don't use it just for ourselves, but we use it for everyone in America, to keep these lights on in this Chamber, to help cool people's homes. As we have seen many times after heat waves strike, people can die in large numbers when the utilities go off.

This is not a laughing matter. This is a very serious matter. We are proud to do it, but we cannot do it any longer without sharing in a portion—a very reasonable portion—of the revenues that are generated. We need those revenues to ensure the safety of the massive amounts of infrastructure that rest atop our rapidly eroding coast.

We generated this year from this section of the gulf about \$6 billion. The

projections are that it could go up to \$12 billion. If we pass this bill, it will open up some other areas which will generate for the Treasury of the United States of America upwards of \$15 billion a year.

The question to my colleagues is, do you think the people who help generate this revenue, the 10 million people who live along this coast, could share in a partnership with these great resources so we can provide some revenue stream to help protect ourselves and the nation's energy infrastructure from hurricanes that come our way; restore the vital wetlands that support this entire Nation; protect and support the mouth of the greatest river system in North America, the Mississippi, help drain two-thirds of the United States, the river that takes 70 percent of the grain from the Midwest?

Is it possible that we could set up a partnership that works for everyone? Or is that impossible these days in Washington?

My people at home can't even understand it. They say: Senator, who would be against revenue sharing?

We are not asking for all of it. We would like 50 percent, but we negotiated a good deal, at 37.5 percent the same percentage that onshore states used to receive from production on the federal lands in their states before it was raised to 50 percent. We are not trying to be hogs, but we are drowning down here.

If you think I am joking about drowning, I would like to show you a picture of one road. Senator DOMENICI has seen this. It made him shudder. This is the highway to Port Fourchon, which is the highway that links the United States of America to about 70 percent of U.S. offshore oil and gas production. This looks like a Third World nation.

I have come here and begged for money to help with this highway. We cannot, as a State of only 4.5 million people, support the entire infrastructure of the United States of America. We can't do it. We are not that rich. We are a Southern State that has serious challenges. I am not saying we are a charity case, but we can't build highways for everybody with only our money, particularly highways that basically carry the natural resources of the Nation. This is what it looks like.

This is the scientists' projected land loss of the Delta plains. This is from the USGS at the Department of the Interior. This map shows the projected land loss. From 1932 to 2050, this is the land lost and the projected land loss by 2050.

People wonder why New Orleans is flooding. This picture shows us why. The great marshland that protected us—up the great river system and the major ports which helped western expansion for the Nation—put it away from the water and protected it so it could help the Nation grow. Since then, we have not done our job using the revenues wisely and reinvesting in this great wetlands to protect it.

This is an opportunity to pass a bill that is balanced, that is smart, that is necessary, that is needed, and that will be put to great use by the coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas to protect the barrier islands that protect the great energy resources of the Nation and the wonderful people who live there.

In conclusion, I will say this: I have taken Senators on planes, flying over these coastal wetlands. I look down at these ports and these bays. In the middle of hurricanes, people whose homes, schools, and churches were destroyed were sleeping on concrete in tents to keep these pipelines open for the Nation when they did not have homes for themselves.

I am not going to go home until a solution is found for the wetlands.

I see the Senator from Florida. I will yield my time. I thank him for his extraordinary leadership in finding the solution for the gulf coast. This is a gulf coast bill. It is not a Louisiana bill, nor a Florida bill—it is a gulf coast bill. We are Gulf Coast States. I am very proud to have Senator MARTINEZ's support.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I join my colleague, the Senator from Louisiana, and thank the chairman of the Energy Committee for his help in moving this bill today. I know it is a very important day for the United States but also for the people of Florida.

S. 3711, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, is a bill that will not only provide very needed resources for our Nation, but it also provides something that is very important to those of us who love and are from the State of Florida, which is protections for our State from encroachment by those who would wish to drill and explore for oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico.

For many years, Members of the House and Senate from Florida have been joined in a struggle to ensure that Florida's economic and environmental interests be protected as exploration for oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico took place.

I am pleased to say that as we have worked through this issue, one of the things that was paramount in our minds was providing some zone of permanent protection for the State of Florida. In this particular arrangement, which we have been able to reach thanks to the good work and understanding of the needs of Florida by Chairman DOMENICI and others, we have been able to find a zone of protection for the State of Florida—a zone of protection that begins in Pensacola and moves south 125 miles in Florida waters but provides an extraordinary zone of protection for the State of Florida, as we obtained not only 125 miles but frankly 237 miles from the coast of Tampa and almost 325 miles from the coast of Naples. The entire west coast of Florida is going to enjoy protection of well over 200 to 300 miles.

We are, in fact, going to be protecting the State of Florida's military mission line. The military in Florida have had a long and close working relationship. We value what they bring to our State and what they provide for our national defense.

The military mission line, in this area, is going to be observed and protected. That is what provides this extraordinary zone of protection beyond the 125 miles we see here. Why is this important? Because while we could not do this permanently—and there is no such thing as permanence—we have been able to provide this zone of protection, all of this in yellow, to the State of Florida until the year 2022, a long time from now.

In addition, a further protection of that, which is incredibly important for our State, there are any number of leases that were at a different time under different leadership and, perhaps, with not as much thought of the impact it could have on our State, our economy, our beaches, our environment. Many leases were given to oil companies, not much more than 3 miles off the coast of Florida, some 8, 10, 15, or 17 miles off the coast. The State of Florida has, in fact, purchased some of the leases in the past. I commend Governor Bush for leading the effort to do so.

Under this bill, under this arrangement, the leases that are interior in the area of Florida can then be swapped out for leases in the areas that will be explored. It is a great and wonderful opportunity for those who are holding leases close to the coast of Florida to swap them out for areas far beyond where they currently are, thus eliminating, beyond the year 2022, any threat on the gulf coast from drilling.

This is an important and good day for Florida. It is something we have battled for long and hard. Senator BILL NELSON and I—my colleague from Florida—filed a bill early this year which provides a 150-mile zone of protection. This is not 150 miles relating to the panhandle, but it is 125 miles and is, as others have said, the best deal on the table.

Is this the answer to our problems? Certainly not long term, certainly not forever. Certainly we have to understand that the future of America, as the President said in his State of the Union Message, is moving away from our dependence, our addiction to fossil fuels. We have to understand that this is at best a bridge into the future. This is at best a way to provide for now so that Florida industries that have been so dependent on gas, such as the phosphate industry, such as fertilizers, and the generation of electricity to cool and warm Florida homes, will not be imperiled.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 30 seconds to conclude.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I know Florida can play a significant role in the development of ethanol and other alternative fuels. I know this is an opportunity for us to bridge into the future. I am delighted that today we are going to provide Florida the kind of protection it needs.

I welcome the opportunity to move S. 3711. It is the last measure, it is the last line. There cannot be any other way but this way if we will have the support of Florida Senators.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who seeks time? The Senator from the great State of New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. How much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Twenty-eight minutes on your side.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Is there time remaining for the proponents?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is no time remaining for the proponents.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, shortly I will be voting for cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 3711. I will be urging other colleagues to do as well. I am not casting my vote for cloture because I support the bill in its current form. On the contrary, I think the bill that has been brought before the Senate is seriously flawed on several grounds. I am voting for cloture on the motion to proceed because I want to have a chance to propose amendments to the bill, propose improvements to the bill. I want this bill to represent good, long-term energy policy and good, long-term fiscal policy for the country.

I am aware of statements made by some that once the Senate is on the bill, there will be an attempt to frustrate the ability of Senators to offer legitimate energy amendments. I will certainly oppose any attempt to prematurely invoke cloture on the bill. Our energy problems in the country are serious business. They cry out for thoughtful responses. They also deserve a process in the Senate that is serious and is thoughtful.

In this Congress, we made great progress on energy because we adopted an open, inclusive, and bipartisan approach on the issues. In my view, that record is at risk if we adopt a process on this bill that is a closed process.

I hope the Senate consideration of this bill will be in the vein of the consideration we gave to the last Energy bill. Americans want positive, forward-looking solutions to our energy problems. They want us to use America's technological know-how to come up with innovative solutions and approaches to our problems. We are only going to be able to find those forward-looking solutions if everyone is given a legitimate opportunity to help the Senate work its will on this legislation.

I yield the floor and retain the remainder of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask that the time during the quorum call be charged equally against both sides.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. No time is remaining on the side of the proponents.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this past weekend I was in Tennessee—in Nashville, my hometown. The visit was an opportunity for me to catch up with constituents. Again and again, whether I was in Nashville or over in Carter County at a wonderful pig roast or over in Jackson, TN, west Tennessee or Memphis, the concern of the high cost of gasoline, the high cost of cooling homes, and the impact on local businesses came up again and again and again.

As I was driving through the streets of Tennessee, the average price of gasoline in Nashville, I remember specifically, was \$2.87 a gallon—kind of a bargain if you compare it to here in DC, where many metro area prices averaged over \$3.08 a gallon this weekend. But people back home in Tennessee feel that it is anything but a bargain. They feel the pinch in their wallets, and it affects how they live every day—whether it is driving their kids to school or taking their vacation at this time of year or filling that tractor with fuel.

Across the Nation, Americans are compensating for these high gas prices and high energy prices by cutting back, feeling the squeeze and having to cut back in other areas. We think twice about going out for dinner or lunch at a restaurant. We select our vacation destinations based today on how far one has to drive from home rather than the appeal of that destination. And we wait a few weeks longer than comfortable before turning on that air-conditioner or heating our homes. That is the direct cost these high energy prices have on our everyday family life.

Many Americans fail to realize the indirect but the very real passthrough costs of high energy prices, the extra energy costs that are hidden in the

prices of the consumer goods and services we use every day. It is not just gasoline prices that are putting that squeeze on American consumers. Right now, American consumers and industries are paying the highest natural gas prices in the world. That translates into, yes, higher heating and cooling bills but also higher prices for farmers trying to buy fertilizer for their fields, higher prices for products made with chemicals, higher prices for paper products, higher prices for manufacturing jobs, which means those jobs ultimately are lost here in America.

Six years ago, America's natural gas bill was \$50 billion. Last year, it was four times that, \$200 billion. In countries competing for American jobs, the price of natural gas is often one-sixth—one-sixth—as much as it is here in the United States. Thus, when U.S. companies are having to pay more for the energy they need, it makes it harder and harder for them to compete in this global marketplace. When they can't compete, they have to make very tough economic decisions that many times result in American jobs having to move overseas—where energy supplies are much more plentiful and the costs are much lower.

The National Association of Manufacturers estimates that more than 3.1 million high-wage manufacturing jobs have been lost in this country over the last 6 years—largely as a result of those high energy prices. Of more than 120 world-scale chemical plants under construction around the world, only 1 is here in the United States. The high cost of natural gas hurts farmers because natural gas is used to make fertilizer. It is hurting the forest industry. It is hurting the paper products industry. Mr. President, 267 mills have closed, and 189,000 jobs have been lost since this runup in natural gas prices over the last 6 years.

We are all familiar with the energy challenges facing America. We are dangerously dependent on foreign sources of oil. We are dangerously dependent on foreign sources of oil—much of it coming from countries with unstable governments or with interests that are clearly contrary to those of our country.

This disparity will only increase if we do not take action. We have to act to increase the amount of American energy. And that, of course, we could use right here in America today.

The bill before us—the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act—is going to do just that. It is action. It will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and natural gas by opening up more than 8 million acres in the gulf to domestic exploration. The area opened under this bill is estimated to contain 1.26 billion barrels of oil and over 5.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. It will have an impact on the prices consumers pay at the pump and on their power bills, as we look to the future. It makes sense: increased supply, when we know that price point is ultimately a product of supply and demand.

I want to make it clear that while this is a first step toward addressing the energy challenges we face, it is an important step. There is a lot more we can and should do in the future to break what the President called our “addiction” to oil, to diversify our energy resources, to increase the use of renewables and alternative sources such as ethanol and biodiesel, clean coal technology, and nuclear power, and to decrease, to minimize, to lessen consumption by consumers.

One year ago this week, the Senate passed a comprehensive national energy policy which, over the course of the last 12 months, has achieved impressive results. As a result of the Energy bill, 27 new ethanol plants have broken ground, 150 more are in the works. The amount of ethanol and biodiesel we use in our gasoline will more than double over the next 6 years, saving 80,000 barrels of oil a day, and 401 new E-85 pumps have been installed. As a result of that comprehensive Energy bill passed last year, the nuclear industry is planning to build 25 new reactors in the United States, enough to power 15 million households with clean, emission-free electricity. Because of the Energy bill passed last year, 120 clean coal facilities are in the planning stages, enough to replace 2 million barrels of oil a day by the year 2025. And because of the comprehensive Energy bill of last year, wind power, solar power, and hydrogen fuel cells all got a major boost. The Energy bill was part of the solution.

The bill on the floor today is that next critical step. Once we pass this bill and begin producing more of America's energy, we will still have a lot more work to do. We need to do more to encourage development of innovative 21st century technologies that will break our addiction to foreign oil. Whether ethanol or hydrogen or coal-to-liquids or new approaches that we can't even imagine today, we must do all we can to support those new technologies, those advanced technologies that will move us beyond the debate over oil and over gas.

For the foreseeable future, we are going to be talking about oil and gas. That is why the bill before us today is so critical. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act will substantially reduce our dependence on foreign oil and natural gas. It will increase moving toward energy independence. It will strengthen our national policy. It will reduce the cost of living for American consumers.

In a post-9/11 world, energy security is a matter of national security. Now more than ever America needs America's energy. That is what this bill does. It brings more American energy to American consumers. It is a bipartisan bill.

I especially thank Senators DOMENICI and LANDRIEU, VITTER, and MARTINEZ, and so many others for helping us get to this point. I hope the Senate will now vote to allow us to begin debate on

this legislation so that we can continue to deliver meaningful solutions to the American people.

I yield the floor.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 10 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will proceed to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 3711. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 529, S. 3711, a bill to enhance the energy independence and security of the United States by providing for exploration, development, and production activities for mineral resources in the Gulf of Mexico, and for other purposes.

Bill Frist, Pete Domenici, Richard G. Lugar, Mitch McConnell, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Jim Bunning, Trent Lott, Christopher S. Bond, Tom Coburn, Wayne Allard, David Vitter, Mel Martinez, Thad Cochran, Jim DeMint, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, Jeff Sessions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is: Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 3711, a bill to enhance the energy independence and security of the United States by providing for exploration, development, and production activities for mineral resources in the Gulf of Mexico, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that if present and voting, the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) would vote “yea.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 86, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 217 Leg.]

#### YEAS—86

Akaka	Chambliss	Ensign
Alexander	Clinton	Enzi
Allard	Coburn	Feingold
Allen	Cochran	Frist
Baucus	Coleman	Graham
Bayh	Collins	Grassley
Bennett	Conrad	Gregg
Bingaman	Cornyn	Hagel
Bond	Craig	Hatch
Brownback	Crapo	Hutchison
Bunning	DeMint	Inhofe
Burns	DeWine	Inouye
Burr	Dodd	Isakson
Byrd	Dole	Jeffords
Cantwell	Domenici	Johnson
Carper	Dorgan	Kennedy
Chafee	Durbin	Kohl

Kyl	Nelson (FL)	Smith
Landrieu	Nelson (NE)	Specter
Leahy	Obama	Stabenow
Levin	Pryor	Stevens
Lincoln	Reid	Sununu
Lott	Roberts	Talent
Lugar	Rockefeller	Thomas
Martinez	Salazar	Thune
McCain	Santorum	Vitter
McConnell	Schumer	Voinovich
Mikulski	Sessions	Warner
Murkowski	Shelby	

## NAYS—12

Boxer	Lautenberg	Reed
Dayton	Lieberman	Sarbanes
Feinstein	Menendez	Snowe
Harkin	Murray	Wyden

## NOT VOTING—2

Biden	Kerry
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 86, the nays are 12. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 87

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 12 noon on Wednesday, July 26, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.J. Res. 87, which was received from the House. I further ask unanimous consent that there be 30 minutes equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, and that following the use or yielding of time, the joint resolution be read a third time and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage without intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

### RETURNED AMERICANS PROTECTION ACT OF 2006

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 5865, which was received from the House.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5865) to amend the Social Security Act to increase the limit on payments for temporary assistance to U.S. citizens returned from foreign countries.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, recent events in the Middle East have led to the evacuation of thousands of U.S. citizens from Lebanon. This evacuation is being conducted by the U.S. State Department.

However, the Department of Health and Human Services, or more specifically, the Administration for Children and Families, ACF, is responsible for assisting U.S. citizens upon their return to the United States.

Over the past several days, ACF has established repatriation facilities at the Baltimore/Washington airport, the Philadelphia airport, and McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. More than

5,000 Americans have been offered assistance at these facilities in recent days. Thousands more are expected within the week.

These repatriation facilities are staffed by Federal and State employees who provide assistance with travel, lodging, and access to medical facilities, as necessary. These employees are doing a tremendous job assisting all of the evacuees.

Unfortunately, under current law, this critical assistance is subject to a statutory cap of \$1 million dollars. Given the expected number of evacuees, the statutory cap could be reached at any moment. Unless Congress acts quickly to raise the cap, the ongoing repatriation efforts will be suspended. We must not allow that to happen.

The legislation I have offered today, along with my colleague from Montana, Senator BAUCUS, will raise the cap to \$6 million through the end of this fiscal year. This increase is expected to fully cover the anticipated costs of the evacuation this year, as well as provide for the continued operation of the repatriation program next year.

In addition to temporarily raising the cap, this legislation would provide the States with the option to use the National Directory of New Hires to verify eligibility under the Food Stamp Program. This language is similar to the provisions in current law now being used to verify eligibility for the SSI Program and to collect delinquent child support payments.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the utilization of this option in the Food Stamp Program would save roughly \$1 million a year, thus offsetting the cost of raising the cap.

In contrast to the legislation passed by the House yesterday, this legislation does not sunset the repatriation program. The repatriation program has been in operation, in one form or another, since the 1930s. There is no reason to believe this program should be abolished. Thus, the sunset provision contained in the House bill is merely a gimmick to create the appearance that the bill is paid for when in fact it is not.

On another matter, the House language includes a requirement for an IG report on the repatriation program. However, it does not appear such a report is necessary.

According to ACF, under the emergency repatriation program each State has an approved plan which they implement when needed. They are allowed to assume costs for all of the activities contained in their approved plan. The States then submit a detailed explanation of how the funds were spent, along with supporting documentation.

Finally, it should be noted that the language in the House bill was intended to lift the million-dollar cap for the current fiscal year. But it is not entirely clear it accomplishes that goal. Under current law, the cap is ef-

fective for fiscal years beginning after September 30, 2003. Under the House-passed language, the cap is effective for fiscal years beginning after September 30, 2006. Since the current fiscal year occurs after 2003 but before 2006, that begs the question—what is the cap for this year? The answer to this question should not be ambiguous. The Senate language clearly states the cap for the current fiscal year is \$6 million.

Given all of these concerns, I urge my colleagues to reject the House language and support the Senate alternative. The Senate alternative will maintain the critical assistance now being provided to evacuees, while at the same time offsetting the cost of this assistance in a reasonable and responsible manner.

I urge its adoption.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I urge the Senate to adopt the Grassley-Baucus amendment to the bill H.R. 5864—The Returned Americans Protection Act of 2006. This bill provides needed resources to the United States Repatriation Program, which is currently assisting U.S. citizens who are returning to United States from Lebanon.

The United States Repatriation Program was established by title XI, section 1113 of the Social Security Act to provide temporary assistance to U.S. citizens and their dependents who have been identified by the Department of State as having returned, or been brought from a foreign country to the U.S. because of destitution, illness, war, threat of war, or a similar crisis. The program is currently being used to provide assistance to citizens returning from Lebanon, but estimates indicate that the program could reach its statutory spending cap at any moment. The cap is currently \$1 million per fiscal year. We have been asked by HHS to increase the cap for fiscal year 2006 to \$6 million.

The Grassley-Baucus amendment lifts the cap for fiscal year 2006 from \$1 million to \$6 million. The amendment also includes an offset from the President's fiscal year 2006 budget to use the National Directory of New Hires, NDNH, to improve the administration of the Food Stamp Program. Access to the NDNH will help USDA verify wage and employment information on food stamp applications. That proposal was scored by CBO as providing \$11 million in savings over 10 years.

We have worked with the Department of Health and Human Services and other Government agencies in creating this legislation. We believe we have a reasonable and fiscally responsible solution to this relatively minor problem. We urge the Senate to adopt our amendment, pass the bill, and send the bill to the House for their immediate consideration.

This bill involves a small and, thankfully, seldom-used Federal program. But as recent news events have made clear, this is a program that can provide much-needed assistance to our constituents during difficult circumstances. We should not allow these